

analysis

FRANK CHODOROV
EDITOR

Political platforms are the product of political patchmen.—UMW JOURNAL

1

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Why Free Schools Are Not Free

DIXON is an obscure mountain village in New Mexico; population 1,300. Its obscurity is presently disturbed by a problem of democracy: the disengagement of secular and religious training in tax-supported schools. Reporters have it that the Catholic citizens, who seem to be politically in the ascendancy, who in New Mexico, have got hold of the management of the Dixon school system, are introducing their catechism into the curriculum and putting the teaching nuns on the payroll.

The Protestant minority vehemently denounce this as an abuse of democratic principle, as well as a misuse of public funds, and have brought the matter to law. Non-Catholic elements outside New Mexico have come to their support, and thus the contention becomes national in scope. Dixon is no longer a village; it is a new battleground in the old war between eccllesiasticism and secularism in education.

The issue will not be settled in the court of law, which can come up with only a temporary compromise, for involved is the larger question as to whether schooling is a proper function of the State. If we admit that it is, then we must also admit that the subject matter of education will be decided by those in control of the political machinery and will vary with the incidence of control. It is silly to think otherwise. The notion that a political institution can be divorced from politics is typical American jabberwocky.

Right now the group most concerned with getting control of tax-supported schools are the theologians. Catholics are particularly active in this effort, for reasons inherent in their faith—but that they show in the fight for "released time" in New York. Practically the entire clerical fraternity (except Jews, whose religious classes are conducted in the evening) joined in demanding that time be set aside for out-of-school religious education. Suppose the children prefer to devote this time to play, rather than the designated purpose; suppose they are encouraged to do so by their non-religious parents, will not the clericals carry on? Will they not strive to put religious training into the regular curriculum? In the matter of "released time," and in the demand that

The tax-supported school, besides being inadequate in other respects, is a most vicious instrument for undermining the concept of liberty. It provides the bureaucrat with the means of moulding the mind at its most pliable stage, and he would be a poor business man if he did not mould it in favor of his business. At maturity, unless it is of the finest quality, that mind is incapable of understanding even the phrases of liberty, let alone its substance. . . . Hence, the first objective in any attack upon the State should be the socialized school. Parents should learn to abhor it. Private schools, particularly in the primary grades, should be encouraged. To further this kind of education, a tax-reform movement, to permit parents to deduct tuition fees from their taxable incomes, would be in order.

imperialism" to other than religious subjects. Large gobs of Socialistic doctrine have seeped into our school text books and the teachers of that persuasion are its proponents. While Socialism is not organized along church lines, the elements of faith in it gives that ideology a religious tinge, and the attitude of Socialists toward non-believers as sinful and wicked suggests a further similarity. Well, how did Social-

ism creep into the school curriculum if not by the political power acquired by its devotees? The outflowing of the teaching of evolution by the anti-Darwinians is an other case in point. Then again, because the Constitutionalists were in the ascendancy in the beginning of our country, the Federalist point of view never got into our history books. How can it be otherwise? As long as schooling is a function of the State, the dominant political group will determine what and how the children will be trained. And for good reason.

THE business of education is the transmission of ideas from those who have them to those who are lacking; that is, from elders to youngsters. But, all ideas acquire value, and those which carry the greatest weight with the elders are the ones which the pupils will be exposed to.

Education, therefore, can never be free from the prejudices and preconceptions of those who are teaching.

Even if the teacher enjoys "academic freedom," he is not free from the values he has built up in his mind. Objectivity is impossible, save with a mind that is incapable of weighing facts. A teacher who is a transcendentalist, will somehow bring in

the concept of "natural law" even if

he does not do his best to disprove it; a

leftist cannot help indoctrinating that

professor's "natural rights" is an arid,

empty air in the classroom. Is man

not from entitling the modernism of

Humboldt's environmentalism. Can the

freethinker avoid being proletarian

historian?

If, because of this value-emphasis that private schools are established and

enforced. The parent selects for his son a classical school or a military school because he puts a higher value on that kind of education; he believes his son is deserving of what he considers better, even if "better" is more education. One may question the judgment of the parent, but one does not question his right; it is his son and his money.

When we get into adult education the heterogeneity of values is most confusing. There are schools

for the teaching of anarchism, the mystic religions, existentialism, decentralism, every shade of Marxism, the ideas of Mary Baker Eddy, of Henry George—schools without end, to say nothing of purely vocational schools. Every enthusiast has his discipline, and so long as private opinion and private property are not outlawed there will be institutions designed to propagate it. Society is none the worse for this practice; in fact, it can be socially beneficial, so long as it remains a private pursuit, for the more values fly around in the cultural air the less likelihood of its being

found up with a dead uniformity.

The tax-supported school cannot permit such free flight to intellectual entrapment. By right of ownership every citizen feels that his values should be included in the curriculum, but by the same right others press their values and in the end somebody must be cheated. The monopolist objects because his line of business is dispensed in the economic

course, the charlatan denounces the literary teacher for debunking national heroes, the classicist despises the emphasis on modernism, and—above all—the socialization made necessary by a diversity of creeds satisfies nobody except the irreligious. The tax-supported school is abomination to somebody, no matter what or how it teaches.

The State as teacher tries to keep to the middle road, which is a denial of all values and satisfies nobody. But, even as a compromiser the State is a failure, for it is compelled by political considerations to favor the values of the dominant elements in the community. The Texas school

system glorifies the oil industry, trade unions must be treated frigently in industrial centers, and in the South "white supremacy" is intimated even by the fact of segregation. Furthermore, the attempt to find a compromise is absurd and has always resulted in the State gradually

losing its grip on the schools.

It is in the schools that the

classical and the scientific

and the political movements in the school

system of taxation. One can read the

books. And now that we have gone in

for State-capitalism in a big way, how

can he question the correctness of TVA, public housing or the monopoly of the mails?

THE private school — the school in which you pay for what you want — would be ideal if it were truly private. But, as in all human affairs, the tentacles of the State reach out into this sphere of education and create disturbance and iniquity. Escape from political interference is impossible as long as men use political means to advance their private purposes.

In pushing their claim for tax-paid transportation for parochial school pupils, the Catholics maintained that under our fiscal system they were paying double for the education of their children; they taxed themselves for the kind of education they deemed desirable and were levied upon for the maintenance of secular schools. Though the transportation issue was finally decided by the weight of the Catholic vote, not by reason, there is an enticing plausibility in this argument; but, when you extend it you come to disturbing questions. Since the general taxpayer provides books and lunches and equipment for the public school pupil, as well as transportation, why not spread this largesse? Should not the private school teacher be put on the public payroll? On the other hand, if the taxpayer contributes anything to the maintenance of the private school why should he not have some say in the subject manner taught?

Furthermore, private schools forfeit their right to complete privacy by asking and getting tax-favors; exemption of their real estate from local levies for one thing. Not only is the property they use for educational purposes untaxed, but in some localities even the property they rent out to commercial institutions is similarly favored. The exemption amounts to a subsidy. For, the values of these properties, frequently located in city centers, are enhanced by the conveniences provided by the taxpayers; the amount of this subsidy is sometimes considerable, as can be ascertained when a school, or a church, disposes of its old site.

There are other tax-favors which make the private school beholden to the State. Where sales taxes obtain, its purchases are frequently excused. If it carries on

any commercial venture in connection with its educational business, such as publishing, that venture pays no tax profits. Then, of course, there is the big advantage of being able to advertise that under its "charter" contributions to its treasury are deductible in computing personal and corporation income taxes.

Thus, the private school sacrifices its integrity on the altar of special privilege. It cannot claim immunity for its values simply because it regularly sells out its immunity. Under the circumstances, "academic freedom" — vis-a-vis the State — is a specious assertion; no private school is likely to jeopardize its privileges by teaching what the State may consider "subversive," and should the State decide to make use of the school's facilities (including the faculty and the curriculum) for its own purposes it would be entirely within its rights.

In the full sense of the word, a free school is one that has no truck with the State, via its taxing powers. The more subsidized it is the less free it is. What is known as "free education" is the least free of all, for it is a State-owned institution; it is socialized education — just like socialized medicine or the socialized post office — and cannot possibly be separated from political control. As for being "free" in the sense of being without cost, that is one of those impostor terms we like to use to hide ugly facts from ourselves; our public education is fully paid for, with all its deficiencies and inadequacies. And it is paid for mainly by the poor, not the rich, because the poor in the aggregate constitute the largest segment of society and therefore pay the most in taxes. It would be an interesting, though useless, exercise to compute the number of private schools that could be maintained with the total amount exacted from us, locally and nationally, for politicalized education.

THE root-question raised by the Dixon affair is not the separation of the church from the school; it is the separation of the school from the State. The channelling of education along religious lines is a consequence of socialization. These days we associate the effort to introduce ecclesiasticism into the schoolroom with the Catholic church. But, the

fact is that in the early history of our country the Protestant denominations fought bitterly against the secularization of all American institutions, including the school, and their lack of success was due mainly to their rivalries; wherever any sect was in the saddle its particular catechism was obligatory education. Even in the lifetime of the present writer, the reading of the New Testament in the daily school assembly was objected to by the Jews, who were promptly rebuffed with the assertion that this is a "Christian country." It should be recalled that only the agnostic leanings of several Constitutional Fathers prevented the official designation of the new nation as a "Christian country" — which, by a strange twist of bigotry, meant an anti-Catholic country; there were few Jews and fewer Mohammedans in the colonies.

If we start with the premise that education is a proper function of the State we must be prepared to accept the corollary: that the kind of education the State dispenses will be that which those in control consider desirable. For the State is not an impersonal or impartial deity; it is a committee of persons, replete with desires, prejudices, values. To the Catholic the highest values are embraced in the sacraments of his church — enjoying divine sanction — and his conscience impels him to promote acceptance of these values. For a thousand years, therefore, he has been preeminently a teacher. When the opportunity falls into his hands, as it has in Dixon, to use political power to advance his cause, he would indeed be lacking in integrity if he failed to take advantage of it. Would it be any different if a Hindu, a Baptist, an atheist or a communist fell heir to political power?

This wrangling over ecclesiasticism in education is a tweedledoo-tweedledum argument. If we would reform our educational system basically we must desocialize it. We must put it back where it belongs, in the hands of parents. Theirs is the responsibility for the breeding of children, and theirs is the responsibility for the upbringing. The first error of public schooling is the shifting of this responsibility, the transformation of the children of men into wards of the State. All the other evils follow from that.

In Defense of Wallace

By FREEMAN TILDEN

THE tomato is God's gift to those who have a grievance which can be settled with soft missile weapons. The egg, in my considered opinion, is second to the tomato, both because of its present marketable value, and because, as an explosive, it calls for better marksmanship. This, I agree, is in the realm of theory. I have never been the target of either. I should like to ask Henry Wallace what he thinks.

For Henry, reaching the high point of one of the strangest political campaigns ever witnessed in our country, decided to go into the Black South, spit in the faces of the supreme whites down there, and see what would happen. The day following the egging and tomatining in North Carolina, I was talking with Elmer Cartledge, who was secretary of Senator Bridges of New Hampshire. Cartledge was born down in Georgia. I lived two

years in South Carolina, and worked on a newspaper down there. We agreed that Wallace would leave the South in a horizontal position, with a bullet in his head. It didn't happen. Neither Elmer nor I can understand it. The one-gallus boys of the Piedmont must be getting soft, since our time.

But this dare-devil leap through the flaming hoop, performed by the flying-trapeze candidate for the Presidency, points up two things long suspected, but now patent, to me. One is, that Henry Wallace should be under the doctor's care. I do not think he is insane, as we commonly think of insanity. But clearly he has been for a long time a victim of an ecstasy, or exaltation, which is quite abnormal and dangerous to himself, and doubly dangerous to any imitators and followers. The other thing is, that the claim of the ex-Communist Budenz, in an

article in *Collier's*, that Wallace has been a "captive" of the Reds since 1944, and is now an unsuspecting tool of them, is wholly or substantially the truth. The two things fit together perfectly. The aberrant mental state known as exaltation renders the victim blind to what others can clearly see; he lives in an insulated state in which the feeling of his importance completely possesses him; all that is necessary, to sell him the brashest gold-brick, is to pamper his mood and cater to his delusion. It was by this easy ruse that the Reds threw their net on him.

I do not think there is the slightest evil intent in the man. I do not believe he would deliberately harm his country. On the contrary, I think he believes he has been chosen to save the world from a dreadful fate. It is a religious experience. And he is a victim, above all, of his association with Franklin Roosevelt and the

New Dealers. Roosevelt himself and finally all those closest to him, had foxes, rhinoceroses and tadpoles in states of existence. Wallace had a lamb, always a fleecy lamb, who would believe in any Mary, and go with him to school. How he survived his association with the New Deal butchers is almost a miracle. It may be that he was retained as a curiosity, or museum. Most of the hundreds of thousands of really fine people who started out early that they had ventured into a "dits" hangout, and ducked out. Some having been robbed of their virginity, others to get a living the easy way, to te home folks they had won the mind in a beauty contest, and to use plaxis. Henry never understood it. He learned to lie and cheat, but because he thought the magnitude of his life mission justified the means of attainment. The Philadelphia nominating and the subsequent barnstorming logically.

All those who attended that convention, as observers or collectors of signatures, agree that the screaming, revolting, hysterical mob which greeted W. in both in the convention hall and on the road, was: (1) greatly made up of people; and (2) wonderfully simple.

Trailing the

THEME song of the campaign: "I Promise Thee."

WITH a few changes in the script, the speeches of either major candidate could well have been made by the other.

TOM DEWEY'S "party line" is to lay off F.D.R. Is it delancy or fear of alienating the cult of Roosevelt-suckers that prompts that policy? If Tom is looking ahead, he may have this thought in mind: when he is elected and begins using up his vote-buying machine for a second term, he would dislike being reminded that he is following in the footsteps of the Great Giver.

COMMENTING on our article *Don't Buy Bonds*, a reader writes: "You are always sure the Government will return your money when you need it." Quite true. Another friend, who did not buy a bond in 1941, but put his money into a home, reports that his investment tripled in value. To be sure, the one who bought the bond helped to cause the inflation from which the non-bond-buying investor now profits.

ANOTHER non-bond-buyer bought an automobile in 1940, used it for seven years, then sold it for what it cost him.

THE *Wall Street Journal* reports: "The Federal Reserve System bought \$650 million of government bonds and short-term U.S. securities during the week of September 22. The offerings came largely from member banks raising funds to meet increased reserve requirements." The plain meaning of this is that the banks are dumping the bonds. To buy up these bonds, the Federal Reserve System issues short-term paper which yields a higher return than the long-term bonds. Thus the fiction of "controlled interest rates" is maintained.

UNION leaders in New York's dress industry were beaten up and the District Attorney now has the chance to spread himself to the head.